A HALF CENTURY OF TEACHER TRAINING IN STATE NORMAL SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS COLLEGES OF THE UNITED STATES, 1890-1940

BY

ARNOLD LEE THOMASSON

A.B., Western Kentucky State Teachers College, 1925

M.A., George Peabody College for Teachers, 1928

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1943

URBANA, ILLINOIS

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The problem. This is a summary of a study which was centered about the evolutionary development of the two-year and the four-year general curricula in 45 normal schools and teachers colleges from 1890 to 1940, inclusive. During this half century teacher training institutions have offered a wide variety of curricula, within which, the type commonly designated as "general" was selected for study in both its two-year and four-year forms. At any given date there have been variations within the group of institutions whose curricula were analyzed with reference to both of these types, but the problem of this thesis was concerned mainly with *changes in the general character of these curricula during the fifty-year period.* The changes have been along the following lines: (1) the academic elevation of the curricula; (2) the balance between academic and professional courses; (3) required and elective academic courses; and (4) required and elective professional courses.

More definitely, the problem, stated in question form, was as follows: (1) *During the fifty-year period from 1890 to 1940, what changes have occurred in student enrollment, in the number of faculty members, and in other similar statistical data related to normal schools and teachers colleges?* (2) *What changes have occurred in the different curricula offered, the departments indicated, and the requirements for admission?* (3) *What have been the changes in the course and semester hour offerings, required and elective, in certain academic fields for the two-year and the four-year curricula?* (4) *What have been the changes in course and semester hour offerings, required and elective, in professional subjects for the two-year and the four-year curricula?* (5) *What have been the changes in the balance between academic and professional work during the fifty years?*

Sources of data. The principal sources of data were catalogs for forty-five institutions for the academic years 1890-91, 1900-01, 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, and 1940-41. In a few cases publications for years immediately preceding or following these were utilized. The institutions whose curricula were studied are located in 28 states with different sections of the country represented numerically as follows: East, 14 schools in 8 states; South, 5 schools in 4

states; Middle West, 18 schools in 10 states; and Far West, 8 schools in 6 states. No more than 3 institutions from any state, and only those which were classified as state institutions and whose catalogs were available for the dates stated above, were included. It is believed that the institutions were representative of state normal schools and teachers colleges in general for the time considered.

Other valuable sources of data included periodicals; United States Government and Carnegie Foundation bulletins; yearbooks of the National Education Association and of the American Association of Teachers Colleges; reports of the United States Commissioner of Education, and of state superintendents of public instruction; and many other professional publications.

General procedure. The principal source material was analyzed for single "academic" years at ten-year intervals from 1890-91 to 1940-41, inclusive. There were forty-five catalogs for each of the six periods. Although many curricula of varying lengths and types were found among the catalogs analyzed, especially during the early years represented, only the two-year and the four-year have received major consideration. In each catalog the curricula which appeared to be the most "general" were the ones selected for study. For instance, in case several two- or four-year curricula were listed in a catalog, those which suggested the least amount of specialization for a particular phase of teaching were analyzed, or, if there were two "general" curricula, one designated as an English and the other a Latin, as was the case several times in the early periods, the English curriculum was considered. If, in any catalog, no curriculum was described which could be classified as "general", none was considered for the year represented. For this reason, the number of curricula for some of the years falls below the number of institutions studied. In no case was more than one four-year and one two-year curriculum included for any institution for a given year.

Plan of treatment. Following the introduction, chapter two presents the status of teacher training in state normal schools in 1890-91. Data include, for the country as a whole, and for different geographical sections, such items as the number of institutions, the size of the teaching staff, and the number of students enrolled. There is also a discussion of the purpose of the normal school in 1890-91, the offerings in "academic" and "professional" subjects for the two-year and four-year general curricula, the different curricula offered, the departments under which courses were arranged, and a study of entrance requirements for that year.

In the third chapter a consideration is given to *changes* during the fifty-year period in the number of normal schools and teachers colleges, their enrollments, the size of their faculties, and the number of graduates; and to changes in conditions of admission, types of curricula, and the departmental organization. Chapter four is concerned principally with the quantitative changes in professional courses for the four-year general curricula. These courses were placed in groups and averages for the number of courses and the semester hours [1] determined for each group for each of the six academic years considered. The grouping of courses is as follows: (1) *History of Education, Principles of Education, and Philosophy of Education;* (2) *Organization, Administration, and Supervision;* (3) *Psychology;* (4) *Tests, Measurements, and Educational Research;* (5) *Practice Teaching and Observation;* (6) *Methods;* and (7) *Miscellaneous courses.* Data are presented for both required and elective [2] courses. The chapter includes a study of "methods" under three sub-heads, namely, "general methods", "special methods", and "group methods". The fifth chapter deals with academic courses in the four-year general curricula. Data presented include the average number of courses and semester hours required, as well as the number offered as electives, in the fields of English, social studies, mathematics, science, foreign language, geography, and miscellaneous subjects for each of the six academic years indicated above. In this chapter a study is also made of the *subjects* offered in the different academic fields over the entire period. Chapter six presents the quantitative changes in *professional* courses and semester hours in the two-year general curricula, while in chapter seven a consideration

[1] In 1890 the semester hour had not been establisehd as a standard unit. In this study, however, because of the need for a unit of comparison and because of its wide use during most of the period considered, the semester hour was selected as the unit for comparing the quantity of work in various subjects and fields during the entire period. An attempt was made to reduce all courses to this unit. A semester hour was considered to be equivalent to one fifty-minute class period a week for a semester of approximately eighteen weeks. It is recognized that the legitimacy of the use of this unit for the early years may be questioned because normal school work at that time was largely of sub-college level, and, therefore, the ratio considered to exist in college work between study and "recitation" in relation to the semester hour probably did not exist.

[2] All courses not specifically required were considered to be electives; that is, they were courses from among which the student might select the limited number of non-required courses permitted. Actually, increases in electives, indicated throughout the fifty-year period, refer to the expansion in the total number of non-required courses offered by institutions.

is given to *academic* work in two-year general curricula. The final chapter is a general summary and conclusions.

It should be pointed out that this investigation was not simply an analytical study of catalog material. It is true that such data formed the major part of the treatment, but much supplementary material gained by a systematic study of other sources, both primary and secondary, provided interpretative background, and in some cases, supporting data.

Definition of terms. *"Curriculum"* and *"course of study"* are used interchangeably to mean the "courses", required and elective, offered toward fulfilling the conditions for graduation or for reaching some terminal point recognized by an institution. Some of the offerings were specifically "prescribed" and were required to be taken by all students, while others, elected by the student, were accepted toward meeting the total number of courses and semester hours to be completed for a certificate, a diploma, or a degree. *"Course"* refers to a single subject, as a "course in science", extending over a term, a quarter, or a semester period. *"Academic subjects"* refer to courses in English, science, social studies, mathematics, foreign language, and all courses not peculiarly adapted to training teachers; that is, they are offered in other types of curricula than those for training teachers. *"Professional subjects"* are such subjects as the history of education, practice teaching, methods of teaching, review courses, which include methods, educational psychology, and the like.

Limitations of the study. Much of the study was based on data obtained from institutional catalogs. It has been said that catalogs do not show the true practices of the institutions concerned. If this contention is true, or partly true, findings of the study should be discounted accordingly. It is emphasized that many conclusions were based on *what the catalogs showed;* therefore, they are valid only if the source material may be relied upon. It is believed that worthwhile studies based on data drawn from sources concerned in this investigation may be made. It seems unwise to accuse the various institutions of giving false information of the type used. In many cases a check with other comparable research has been made. For this particular kind of investigation the sources utilized appeared to be about the only ones available.

Summary and conclusions. In 1890-1891, the first year considered in this study, normal schools were different institutions from the teachers colleges of 1940-1941. In the former year, as in their

previous years of existence, normal schools were institutions for the *professional training of teachers for the elementary school.* Practice teaching, psychology, history of education, methods, and a knowledge of the common branches were regarded as desirable for prospective teachers. Within the fifty-year period, curricula have evolved from their relatively low academic rank to standardized curricula of collegiate grade.

In the early years normal schools were highly individualistic institutions. Much variation in organization, entrance requirements, types of curricula, and prescribed and elective courses offered, existed among these institutions. In 1890 there was little uniformity with respect to the number of years of work offered among different institutions, and in some cases curricula of several different lengths were found in the same institution. Curricula varied in length from one to five or six years, with the two-, three-, and four-year organizations predominating. For the most part, "academic courses" in all of the different curricula were of no higher than secondary-school grade, and much of the professional work was in the form of reviews (special methods) of the common school branches. There was little differentiation of curricula except in relation to length.

Before the turn of the century, however, there was an upward extension of teacher training which led to longer total periods of study and to more advanced work.[3] In the place of the earlier post-elementary curricula of no higher than secondary-school grade, two years of post-high-school work were introduced. At the same time some institutions retained their former four-year curricula to which students were admitted directly from the elementary school. This meant that the academic level of the new two-year curricula, which required high-school graduation for admission, was, in the first years

[3] Along with changes in academic standing there has been an almost continuous expansion in relation to the number of institutions, their enrollments, and the size of their faculties. According to statistics published by the United States Commissioner of Education, in 1890 there was a total of 131 schools for training teachers supported wholly or partially by public funds; there were 1,578, or an average of 12 members, in the teaching staff. These schools had a total enrollment of 31,792, or an average of 243 students. In 1937-38, the latest date for which statistics were available, there were 156 publicly controlled teachers colleges and 33 public normal schools, a total of 189 institutions. The student enrollment was 136,638, or an average of 723. The average size of the teaching staff was 53.

After the development of the teachers college, normal schools decreased in number. This decrease was particularly noticeable during the years from 1921-22 to 1932-33. Teachers colleges showed a substantial increase during this period.

of development, higher than that of the early four-year curricula. However, this condition did not long continue, because in the further expansion of teacher-training programs four-year curricula of post-high-school work were developed. These later became the standard teachers college curricula. In this transformation the two-year "courses of study" became curricula which corresponded in general to the first half of the four-year organization. Thus the trend of the period has been from general curricula, varying with respect to both academic level and length, to a four-year curriculum of collegiate grade with a terminal point at the end of two years.

Although, as previously stated, this study was concerned principally with two- and four-year general curricula, some attention was given in Chapter III to other types of curricula which have been offered during the fifty-year period. A tabulation of the number of curricula listed in institutional catalogs, showed an increase from 118 in 1890-91 to 222 for the year 1920-21, and a decrease to 200 for 1940-41. The decade of greatest increase was from 1910-11 to 1920-21, when there was an increase of about 80 per cent. The number of curriculum titles, as well as the actual number of curricula, reached a peak in 1920-21. The number of titles for this year was 52; by 1940-41 there was a reduction of about 27 per cent. This decrease was probably related to the tendency after 1920-21 toward less differentiation in curricula for different types of positions and toward providing for "specialization" in general curricula by a system of "majors" and "minors". Although much variation still exists among the institutions in types of curricula, as well as in their number and length, there has been a tendency to eliminate all except the two- and the four-year organizations. During the last twenty years there has been a trend toward an increase in the number of four-year and a decrease in the two-year curricula. These curricula have included for many years not only preparation for elementary teachers, which, as stated above, was the principal function of normal schools in 1890-91, but also training for teaching at various "levels" and for different types of high-school positions, as well as for administrative and supervisory work.

A phase of the evolutionary changes in the curricular organization and in the academic status of normal schools and teachers colleges from no higher than secondary-school level to collegiate standing has been the raising of entrance requirements. In 1890 extremely low admission conditions prevailed. Although there was much variation among different institutions, entrance, in general, was on the

basis of an examination in certain elementary-school subjects. During the fifty-year period entrance requirements have become relatively well standardized. High-school graduation or the equivalent has been generally required for nearly twenty years.

With respect to the development of entrance requirements during the period of study, the following may be listed as the consecutive evolutionary steps: (1) From the requirement of an examination in the common branches, to (2) high-school graduation, to (3) high-school graduation with the additional requirement that certain specified secondary-school subjects should be completed, to (4) high-school graduation with a stated proportion of work in certain fields, to (5) high-school graduation with definite requirements in indicated groups of subjects, and the use of additional selective admission procedures.

In the process of evolving from relatively low standards to collegiate rank, teacher-training institutions have undergone important changes, not only in relation to curricular organization, academic status, and conditions of admission, but also with respect to the *quantity* of their academic and professional requirements and other offerings. A consideration of semester hour requirements, determined on the basis of the number of class periods per week for a semester, (for the entire period, a semester hour was considered to be equivalent to one fifty-minute class period a week for a semester of approximately eighteen weeks), revealed that, as standards were raised during the first thirty years of the fifty-year period, the semester hours of specified work to be completed for a diploma or a degree decreased, until in the early twenties the accepted standard came to be from 120 to 130 semester hours in the four-year and from 60 to 70 in the two-year curricula.

The balance between academic and professional work within the total requirements varied throughout the fifty years. The total academic requirement in the four-year general curricula, although constituting a larger part of all requirements than professional courses, has shown, for the period as a whole, a proportionately larger decrease. The average number of semester hours of academic work specically required in the four-year curricula in 1890-91 was 93.44. The data for each tenth year from this date to 1930-31, inclusive, showed a decrease over the preceding decade in the average number of hours of academic work required. The number in 1930-31 was 37.62, which represented a reduction of approximately 60 per cent

during the preceding 40 years.[4] In total specified requirements, academic and professional combined, there was a 49 per cent decrease during the same period. From 1930-31 to 1940-41, however, *there was an increase of approximately 33 per cent* in the average number of semester hours of academic work required. In the same decade professional requirements showed a *10 per cent increase*, indicating that there has been a tendency in recent years to decrease the amount of elective work. Considering the entire period from 1890-91 to 1940-41, it may be stated that *in the four-year general curricula both professional and academic specified requirements have decreased, but that the decrease has been more pronounced in academic than in professional courses.*

In the two-year curricula the tendency has been in the same general direction as in the four-year. However, differences noted were that the decrease in total specified requirements was less marked in the two- than in the four-year curricula; and that professional requirements in the two-year have continued to decrease during the last ten years.

An important fact that stood out over the entire period was the emphasis on academic work. In 1890-91, 76 per cent of the total specified requirements in four-year general curricula was academic, and for no period studied was the corresponding per cent less than 59. When consideration is given to the fact that within the fifty years studied, academic work always formed more than half of the total specified requirements; that in the early years a large proportion of "review courses" was classified as "professional"; that semester hours in "major" and "minor" requirements, which could not be precisely determined, were probably more academic than professional; and that most electives were in academic subjects, the conclusion must be that in normal schools and teachers colleges much emphasis has been given to academic work.

Although *requirements* in both the two- and the four-year general curricula have been *decreased* during the period of the study, curricular offerings in the form of electives have greatly *increased.* The data for each of the six academic years studied showed an increase, year after year, for four decades or more in courses offered

[4] These figures refer to semester hours in courses *specifically designated as required.* "Major" and "minor" requirements, which were introduced within the period studied, and which varied according to student choice, were not included. Therefore, the per cent of reduction given does not represent the decrease in the *total academic load.*

in subject-matter and professional fields. This curricular expansion has meant a greater variety of courses from which the student might choose the number of electives permitted.

Also, in view of the decrease in total required semester hours during the first four decades studied, it may be stated that, not only were more courses available from which to choose electives, but also a larger percentage of the student's load consisted of electives. There seemed to be a definite tendency until about 1930-31 to permit more election. This development in the early years was perhaps due in part to the tendency in liberal arts colleges to extend elective offerings.

The multiplication of courses has been related also to the trend toward differentiation of curricula according to function. Soon after the turn of the century institutions began to enlarge the scope of training offered to include preparation for numerous types of teaching positions as well as for different levels of teaching. Study for teaching at the various levels of the elementary school was provided for in such curricula as the "kindergarten," the "primary," the "intermediate," and the "upper grades." For high-school teachers, fields of specialization were offered. The adoption of the elective system tended toward providing for the varied interests and abilities of students. However, differentiation of curricula resulted in specialization, a condition which led to the belief by some people that the student's training in normal schools and teachers colleges was too narrow. Consequently, within the last decade there has been some indication of a renewed emphasis on broad rather than specialized training. Before 1940-41 a tendency was developing toward decreasing the number of electives permitted and increasing the semester hours of specified courses required for graduation. This tendency was more pronounced with reference to academic than professional work. It appeared that objectives in teacher training were becoming more clearly defined.

Not only have there been changes in relation to the quantitative requirements and offerings of normal schools and teachers colleges during the half century, but also in relation to curricular content as revealed by the different types of courses listed in institutional publications. Although the scope of this study did not permit an analysis of subject-matter content, the titles of courses indicated some general tendencies.

As already pointed out, academic work in the early years was, in general, of no higher than secondary-school rank and much of it was a review of elementary-school subjects. Around the turn of the

century post-high-school work was being offered. It did not compare favorably in content with college courses. Work was criticized as being superficial. With the advent of the teachers college, secondary-school subjects tended to be eliminated from the curriculum and courses of college grade were introduced. It has been stated and probably correctly so, that the early so-called college courses in normal schools were inferior in quality when compared with corresponding work in liberal arts colleges. With the standardization of the teachers college, these courses have been strengthened. In the early years, normal schools included certain acdaemic courses because they felt compelled to do so. Many of their students were weak in these subjects. In contrast, however, teachers colleges today offer academic work for its general educational value; and much of it appears to compare favorably with courses offered in liberal arts colleges and universities. Only a small per cent of academic courses in teachers colleges is professionalized to any great extent.

In academic work *continued emphasis has been given to courses in English, science, social studies, and geography.* Large decreases were observed in requirements in mathematics and foreign languages. In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of courses classified in the present study as miscellaneous. This fact may indicate a tendency to broaden and vary the contacts of prospective teachers. The miscellaneous subjects included art, health education, music, household arts, industrial arts, and other offerings. In some academic fields, particularly in science and social studies, there has been an increase in survey and orientation courses. This seems to be an important step toward providing broad acquaintance with important fields. There also appeared to be a recent tendency toward broad majors in the field of science and social science.

In professional subjects the following have been required in some schools over the entire fifty years: General administration, School Law, School Management, History of Education, Philosophy of Education, Principles of Education, Practice Teaching, Observation, Special Methods, and General Methods. However, the number of schools requiring School Law and History of Education showed a continuous decrease from 1890-91 to 1940-41. There was an increase after 1920-21 in the number requiring Special Methods and General Methods. Practice Teaching, Psychology, and "all Methods combined" have been required by more than 50 per cent of the institutions over the entire fifty years. The per cent requiring Practice Teaching and Psychology was never less than 70. In relation to the

total semester hours of professional requirements, the following groups of subjects, considered as groups, showed *increases* from 1920-21 to 1940-41: (1) Organization, Administration, and Supervision, (2) Tests, Educational Measurements, and Educational Research, and (3) Psychology. *Decreases* were found for the following: (1) History, Principles, and Philosophy of Education, and (2) "All Methods combined." Requirements in Practice Teaching and Observation have been consistently high over the entire period.

An analysis of the data relative to professional requirements in state normal schools and teachers colleges for both the two-year and the four-year curricula led to the conclusion that, in general, Practice Teaching, Psychology, and Methods courses have been well established and regarded as highly important in the professional preparation of teachers. A consideration of the *increasing requirements* in these subjects and the *decreasing number* of courses in History, Principles, and Philosophy of Education points toward an emphasis on the more "practical" types of courses; that is, subject matter which appears to be more directly related to the actual practice of teaching.

In relation to changes in academic and professional courses it should be pointed out that there has been a transformation from a chaotic arrangement of courses without much regard to sequential order or standardization to a comparatively well-balanced program of studies including a relatively well-ordered arrangement of elementary and advanced work.

Although causes for changes in practices were not studied systematically, as other types of data than those used would have been required, the evolution of teacher training institutions seemed to be related in general to changing needs and conditions in public education. The public school curriculum has been expanded to include new types of subject matter; the school period for most children has been extended to four years of high school; enrollments have increased; curriculum content has been enriched throughout the elementary and high-school years. Earlier provisions for teacher training were inadequate to meet the needs of the enlarging program of public education; accordingly, normal schools and teachers colleges have expanded their curricula and raised their standards largely in response to changing needs. The normal school of 1890 has become the teachers college of 1940. During this half century, the programs of state normal schools and teachers colleges have been enlarged to encompass not only more functionally organized *professional training* for teachers and *pre-professional work* for persons

expecting to go into other occupations, but also more systematized *general education*. The influence of the state teachers college today extends to practically all branches of the educational system from the pre-school to the graduate level.

VITA

Arnold Lee Thomasson was born January 7, 1903, son of Mr. and Mrs. David D. Thomasson, in Lowes, Kentucky. He was graduated from the Lowes High School, Lowes, Kentucky, in May 1920. He attended Georgetown College, Georgetown, Kentucky, from 1920 to 1922. He was a student in Western Kentucky State Teachers College for 2 years, and received the A.B. degree from this institution in June, 1925. He studied at George Peabody College for Teachers during the summer quarters of 1926, 1927, and 1928, receiving the M.A. degree in School Administration in August, 1928. During the academic year 1930-1931, he was enrolled in the Graduate School of the University of Illinois. From 1936 to 1942 he has done additional graduate work in the Department of Education, University of Illinois. He is a member of Phi Delta Kappa.

He has been employed in the following positions: Superintendent of the Elementary and High School, Rochester, Kentucky, 1924-1925; Principal of the Elementary School, Shelbyville, Kentucky, 1925-1927; Principal of the High School, Shelbyville, Kentucky, 1927-1930; Instructor in Education, Western Kentucky, State Teachers College, summer, 1929; Assistant, College of Education, University of Illinois, second semester, 1930-1931; Instructor in Mathematics, Junior High School, Louisville, Kentucky, 1931-1932; Principal, Township High School, Equality, Illinois, 1932-1935; Principal, Junior High School, Champaign, Illinois, 1935-

Publications by him include:

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